

Food Irradiation Subcommittee Delivers Final Report to AEC

At the regular meeting of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) held on October 3, members discussed the final report submitted by the Food Irradiation Subcommittee, and decided that its contents ought to be “respected,” and that the relevant ministries and agencies should make “deliberations and assessments of irradiation” for those foods for which its utility has been recognized. (See also the July 13 article “Subcommittee Puts Together Draft Report on Food Irradiation, Stressing Its Utility for Spices”.)

Subcommittee Chairman Mikiro Tada, a professor at Chugoku Gakuen University in Okayama Prefecture, presented the report to the AEC meeting. In his explanation, he said, “Although international organizations have given recommendations and many countries have made appropriate judgments and responses on a national level, only Japan has failed to discuss the matter seriously in the past, and that does not benefit the Japanese people. In order to promote greater understanding among the public, I would like to call upon the AEC to act as the ‘flag bearer’ for the cause.”

In its decision, the AEC praised the report, saying that it “has been drawn up after sufficient studies and deliberations have been made, and we respect the ideas therein.” It then called upon the relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), to do four main things, among others: (1) carry out deliberations and assessments related to irradiation for those foods (starting with spices) for which food irradiation has proven effective, based on the Food Sanitation Law and the Food Safety Basic Law; (2) deliberate the proper kind of labeling; (3) legislate an official detection method as early as possible; and (4) deliberate the proper responses for supervision and guidance. The AEC also called upon researchers and businesses to unstintingly work toward the research and collection of safety-related knowledge, and to carry out research to make detection technology more sophisticated.

From now on, the AEC will concentrate on policy evaluation, ascertaining how the relevant ministries and agencies are grappling with the issue, and making appropriate responses.

At its 10th meeting on September 26, the subcommittee gave its imprimatur to the final report after reflecting public comments, 484 of which had been received in the one-month period between July 26 and August 25.

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